

Annamalai Swami Quotes on Self Inquiry Meditation

If you can be continuously aware of each thought as it arises, and if you can be so indifferent to it so that it doesn't sprout or flourishes, you are well on your way to escape from the entanglement of the mind.

~ Annamalai Swami ~



Annamalai Swami - Bhagavan [Ramana Maharshi] has said: 'When thoughts arise stop them from developing by enquiring, "To whom is this thought coming?" as soon as the thought appears. What does it matter if many thoughts keep coming up? Enquire into their origin or find out who has the thoughts and sooner or later the flow of thoughts will stop.' This is how self-enquiry should be practiced.

When Bhagavan spoke like this he sometimes used the analogy of a besieged fort. If one systematically loses off all the entrances to such a fort and then picks off the occupants one by one as they try to come out, sooner or later the fort will be empty.

Bhagavan said that we should apply these same tactics to the mind. How to go about doing this? Seal off the entrances and exits to the mind by not reacting to rising thoughts or sense impressions. Don't let new ideas, judgements, likes, dislikes, etc. enter the mind, and don't let

rising thoughts flourish and escape your attention.

When you have sealed off the mind in this way, challenge each emerging thought as it appears by asking, 'Where have you come from?' or 'Who is the person who is having this thought?' If you can do this continuously, with full attention, new thoughts will appear momentarily and then disappear.

If you can maintain the siege for long enough, a time will come when no more thoughts arise; or if they do, they will only be fleeting, undistracting images on the periphery of consciousness. In that thought-free state you will begin to experience yourself as consciousness, not as mind or body.

However, if you relax your vigilance even for a few seconds and allow new thoughts to escape and develop unchallenged, the siege will be lifted and the mind will regain some or all of its former strength.

In a real fort the occupants need a continuous supply of food and water to hold out during a siege. When the supplies run out, the occupants must surrender or die. In the fort of the mind the occupants, which are thoughts, need a thinker to pay attention to them and indulge in them.

If the thinker withholds his attention from rising thoughts or challenges them before they have a chance to develop, the thoughts will all die of starvation. You challenge them by repeatedly asking yourself 'Who am I? Who is the person who is having these thoughts?' If the challenge is to be effective you must make it before the rising thought has had a chance to develop into a stream of thoughts.

Mind is only a collection of thoughts and the thinker who thinks them. The thinker is the 'I'-thought, the primal thought which rises from the Self before all others, which identifies with all other thoughts and says, 'I am this body'. When you have eradicated all thoughts except for the thinker himself by ceaseless enquiry or by refusing to give them any attention, the 'I'-thought sinks into the Heart and surrenders, leaving behind it only an awareness of consciousness.

This surrender will only take place when the 'I'-thought has ceased to identify with rising thoughts. While there are still stray thoughts which attract or evade your attention, the 'I'-thought will always be directing its attention outwards rather than inwards. The purpose of self-enquiry is to make the 'I'-thought move inwards, towards the Self. This will happen automatically as soon as you cease to be interested in any of your rising thoughts.

Source: from book "Living by the Words of Bhagavan", pages 272–73.

This book is written by David Godman and it contains wonderful account of Annamalai Swami Life with Ramana Maharshi, Stories of How Ramana Ashram was constructed, Annamalai Swami answers to meditation Questions of Seekers

If you are having trouble with your enthusiasm for sadhana, just tell yourself, 'I may be dead in seven days'. Let go of all the things that you pretend are important in your daily life and instead focus on the Self for twenty-four hours a day. Do it and see what happens.

Remember that nothing that happens in the mind is 'you', and none of it is your business. You don't have to worry about the thoughts that rise up inside you. It is enough that you remember that the thoughts are not you.

Go deeply into this feeling of 'I'. Be aware of it so strongly and so intensely that no other thoughts have the energy to arise and distract you. If you hold this feeling of 'I' long enough and strongly enough, the false 'I' will vanish leaving only the unbroken awareness of the real, immanent 'I', consciousness itself..

Continuous attentiveness will only come with long practice. If you are truly watchful, each thought will dissolve at the moment that it appears. But to reach this level of disassociation you must have no attachments at all. If you have the slightest interest in any particular thought, it will evade your attentiveness, connect with other thoughts, and take over your mind for a few seconds. This will happen more easily if you are accustomed to reacting emotionally to a particular thought.

Self-inquiry must be done continuously. It doesn't work if you regard it as a part-time activity.

Sadhana is a battlefield. You have to be vigilant. Don't take delivery of wrong beliefs and don't identify with the incoming thoughts that will give you pain and suffering. But if these things start happening to you, fight back by affirming, 'I am the Self; I am the Self; I am the Self;'. These affirmations will lessen the power of the 'I am the body' arrows and eventually they will armour-plate you so successfully, the 'I am the body' thoughts that come your way will no longer have the power to touch you, affect you or make you suffer.

If you can hold on to this knowledge 'I am Self' at all times, no further practice is necessary.

There is nothing wrong with looking at Bhagavan's picture. It is a very good practice. But you should not get sidetracked from your main objective which is establishing yourself as consciousness. Don't get attached to states of bliss or give them priority over the quest for the Self.

There are so many thoughts in the mind. Thought after thought after thought. But there is one thought that is continuous, though it is mostly sub-conscious: 'I am the body'. This is the string on which all other thoughts are threaded. Once we identify ourselves with the body by thinking this thought, maya follows. It also follows that if we cease to identify with the body, maya will not affect us anymore. When the rejection of mental activities becomes continuous and automatic, you will begin to have the experience of the Self.

A strong determination to pursue enquiry in this way will dissolve all doubts. By questioning 'Who am I?' and by constantly meditating, one comes to the clarity of being. As long as vasanas continue to exist they will rise and cover the reality, obscuring awareness of it. As often as you become aware of them, question, 'To whom do they come?' This continuous enquiry will establish you in your own Self and you will have no further problems. When you know that the snake of the mind never existed, when you know that the rope of reality is all that exists, doubts and fears will not trouble you again.

Meditation must be continuous. The current of meditation must be present in all your activities. With practice, meditation and work can go on simultaneously.

One must keep one's attention on the Self if one wants to make progress on the spiritual path

The thoughts that come and go are not you. Whatever comes and goes is not you. Your reality is peace. If you don't forget that, that will be enough.

Bhagavan's famous instruction 'summa iru' [be still] is often misunderstood. It does not mean that you should be physically still; it means that you should always abide in the Self... In sattva guna [a state of mental quietness and clarity] there is stillness and harmony. If mental activity is necessary while one is in sattva guna it takes place. But for the rest of the time there is stillness... If sattva guna predominates one experiences peace, bliss, clarity and an absence of wandering thoughts. That is the stillness that Bhagavan was prescribing.

Bhagavan is always present, inside you and in front of you. If you don't cover the vision of Bhagavan with your ego, that will be enough. The ego is the 'I am the body' idea. Remove this idea and you shine as the Self.

When I say, 'Meditate on the Self' I am asking you to be the Self, not think about it. Be aware of what remains when thoughts stop. Be aware of the consciousness that is the origin of all your thoughts. Be that consciousness. In the same way, mind is just a Self-inflicted area of darkness in which the light of the Self has been deliberately shut out.

The mind and the body are both inert. Any energy or peace you experience can only come from the Self. Drop the identification with the body. These experiences are making you too body-conscious. Just be aware of the Self and try to pay as little attention as possible to the body. The Self is pure energy, pure power. Hold onto that.

If you can give up duality, Brahman alone remains, and you know yourself to be that Brahman, but to make this discovery continuous meditation is required. Don't allocate periods of time for this. Don't regard it as something you do when you sit with your eyes closed. This meditation has to be continuous. Do it while eating, walking and even talking. It has to be continued all the time.

Remember that nothing that happens in the mind is 'you', and none of it is your business. You

don't have to worry about the thoughts that rise up inside you. It is enough that you remember that the thoughts are not you.

Tayumanuvar, a Tamil saint whom Bhagavan often quoted, wrote in one of his poems: 'My Guru merely told me that I am consciousness. Having heard this, I held onto consciousness. What he told me was just one sentence, but I cannot describe the bliss I attained from holding onto that one simple sentence. Through that one sentence I attained a peace and a happiness that can never be explained in words.'

In every moment you only have one real choice: to be aware of the Self or to identify with the body and the mind.

You have to keep up the enquiry, 'To whom is this happening?' all the time. If you are having trouble remind yourself, 'This is just happening on the surface of my mind. I am not this mind or the wandering thoughts.' Then go back into enquiry 'Who am I?'. By doing this you will penetrate deeper and deeper and become detached from the mind. This will only come about after you have made an intense effort.

Your ultimate need is to get established in the changeless peace of the Self. For this you have to give up all thoughts.



[http://www.messagefrommasters.com/Stories/Sexuality/Annamalai Swami enlightened Disciple of Raman Maharshi and sexual desire.htm](http://www.messagefrommasters.com/Stories/Sexuality/Annamalai_Swami_enlightened_Disciple_of_Raman_Maharshi_and_sexual_desire.htm)

Q: People who follow other paths sometimes experience samadhi states. Will they also have the experience of sphurana? (a light-experience which can come before the samadhi experience)

Annamalai Swami: If one unceasingly follows the paths of japa or yoga, the mind will merge eventually in the sphurana. At the time of merging the experience will come. This sphurana is the light or the radiance of the 'I am'. When you are close to merging with the real 'I' you feel its emanations. This real 'I' is the real name and form of God. The first and most accurate name of God is 'I'. The awareness 'I am' is the original and primordial mantra.

Q: So the 'I'-mantra is even prior to pranava, the sound of OM?

AS: Yes, that is what Bhagavan said on several occasions. This consciousness, the 'I am', is existing and shining always, but your awareness of it is obstructed by the ego in just the same way that the shadow of the earth hides the moon during an eclipse. The shadow over the moon is only visible because of the moonlight behind it. Without this light the shadow of the eclipse could not be seen. Like this we are conscious of the body, the mind and the world even when they obstruct our clear vision only because of the light of the Self. By the light of the Self all this is seen.

Q: How did this single, unbroken 'I' become the many different things and people that we see in the world?

AS: It didn't. It always remains single and unbroken. Your defective vision and your misperceptions give you the impression that the one became the many. The Self has never undergone any change or transformation except in your imagination. When we identify ourselves with the body the mind, the one appears to become many. When one's energy is diverted from the mind and the outside world towards the Self, the illusion of multiplicity fades away.

Go deeply into this feeling of 'I'. Be aware of it so strongly and so intensely that no other thoughts have the energy to arise and distract you. If you hold this feeling of 'I' long enough and strongly enough, the false 'I' will vanish leaving only the unbroken awareness of the real, immanent 'I', consciousness itself.

- Living by the Words of Bhagavan, p 298 , 299



Bhagavan once said to me : 'The one who limits the Self by believing himself to be the body and the mind has 'killed' his own Self. For killing the Self he has to be punished. The punishment is birth and death and continuous misery.

Q.: Is the ending of misery determined by prarabdha karma, or can we bring it nearer by personal effort?

Annamalai Swami: The misery comes to an end only by realizing the Self, not by any other means.

Q: Can this happen at any time?

AS: Here and now you are already the Self. You don't need time to realize it, all you need is correct understanding. Each moment you identify yourself with the body and the mind, you are going in the direction of ego and misery. The moment you give up that identification, you are moving towards your real Self, towards happiness.

Q: ... If I try to generate this feeling 'I am the Self' it will not be the real thing. It will be just another idea in the mind. Can thinking about this idea really help me?

AS: When I say, 'Meditate on the Self' I am asking you to be the Self, not think about it. Be aware of what remains when thoughts stop. Be aware of the consciousness that is the origin of all your thoughts. Be that consciousness. Feel that this is what you really are. If you do this you are meditating on the Self. But if you cannot stabilize in that consciousness because your vasanas are too strong and too active, it is beneficial to hold onto the thought, 'I am the Self; I am everything.' If you meditate in this way you will not be cooperating with the vasanas that are blocking your Self-awareness. If you don't cooperate with them, sooner or later they are bound to leave you.

If this method doesn't appeal to you, then just watch the mind with full attention. Whenever the mind wanders, become aware of it. See how thoughts connect with each other and watch how this ghost called mind catches hold of all your thoughts, saying, 'This is my thought.' Watch the ways of the mind without identifying with them in any way. If you give your mind your full, detached attention, you begin to understand the futility of all mental activities. Watch the mind wandering here and there, seeking out useless and unnecessary things or ideas, which will ultimately only create misery for itself. Watching the mind gives us a knowledge of its inner processes. It gives us an incentive to stay detached from all our thoughts. Ultimately, if we try hard enough, it gives us the ability to remain as consciousness, unaffected by transient thoughts.